

Sisters of St. Francis

o f M a r y I m m a c u l a t e

Sister Geraldine Podobnik was born on February 15, 1939, to Mary and Frank Podobnik and grew up in Joliet as the second of their five children. Geri had an older brother, Frank, two younger brothers, Joseph and Raymond (all deceased now), and one younger sister, Susan (living). Family meant everything to her, and she loved talking about them and relating to them. One classmate recalled recently how, as a postulant, she eagerly looked forward to reading the Joliet Herald newspaper on Saturday mornings to see how her football-playing brothers did in Friday night games at Joliet Catholic High. Once, she was delighted to see a photo that captured her little sister cheering for the team.

Sister Geraldine, known first as Sister Carmelyn with her pre-Vatican II name, had attended St. Mary Nativity elementary school, St. Francis Academy, and the College of St. Francis, cementing her roots in Joliet. She always hoped to be a nurse, but instead of joining a nursing community, she wanted to join the Joliet Franciscans because they had been her teachers. She did receive a promise, though, that if she came and then agreed to teach for a time, she could eventually go to nursing school.

Geri's first assignment was to teach the first grade at St. Rita of Cascia School in Aurora (1961-1963). She would have liked to teach the older children, but she got her chance to interact with them by being the umpire for their baseball games. Experience with her brothers had prepared her for that. She went on to teach at St. Mary's in Des Plaines and St. Joseph's in Joliet until, finally, she was allowed to attend St. Joseph's Hospital School of Nursing in Joliet in 1967. Geri had been an excellent teacher, but never gave up her dream of becoming a nurse.

Alleluia!



Sister Geraldine Podobnik, OSF

Also, by staying in Joliet during her training, she was able to keep an eye on her mother who was ill. After becoming a licensed nurse in 1970, Geri spent the rest of her life caring for the sick in Illinois and Ohio.

It was in 1992, when being interviewed for the Mercy Health Care newsletter in Homewood, Illinois, that Sister Geri said, "We treat the residents and their families as the people of God...looking to provide them with dignity in living; we work to give them what is due to them as human beings. Helping others helps us to grow older and wiser and more beautiful as the years go by." Mercy defined her ministry and it seems to be no coincidence that several places where she worked emphasized that in their names: St. Vincent Mercy Medical Center in Toledo, Ohio, where she became a medical-surgical staff nurse; Mercy Health St. Charles Hospital, in Oregon, Ohio, where she worked as Patient Care Coordinator of Medical-Surgery; Mercy Health Care and Rehabilitation Center in Homewood, Illinois, where she was The Director of Nursing.

Both before and after other nursing assignments at institutions around Illinois and Ohio, Sister Geri ministered at Our Lady of Angels, the retirement and nursing home

facility owned and operated by the Joliet Franciscans. From initially being a staff nurse there to later being a Care Coordinator, to volunteering health care where needed during her retirement, she remained dedicated to those with serious illnesses. Geri said, "My faith in God and in the people I serve gives me strength when my position is challenging."

Another classmate, sharing stories about Geri, said she was a very good cook. One year at Our Lady of Angels, she provided the dinner for a Notre Dame versus The Ohio State University football game viewing party. (There are big rivalries between Joliet Franciscans who are natives of Illinois and Ohio.) Geri was always ready to cook or bake or bring desserts.

While nursing in Ohio, Sister Geri lived for a time with her Franciscan Sisters at Immaculate Conception Parish in Toledo. They attest that she made lots of friends in the parish, was very aware of the elderly, and knew how to take care of people. "She was generous and had a heart of gold", said one sister. While working full time in Joliet, Geri also provided home health care for her mother, her brother, and her uncle in their final illnesses. In the end, her uncle gave her his home where she lived until right before her own death at Edward Hospital in Naperville, Illinois, on March 10, 2025. While living in that home, Geri hosted her out-of-town classmates when they came to Joliet for community meetings.

In 1997, Sister Geri wrote, "If occasionally I wonder what it would be like to have a more glamorous, less demanding and better paying job, five minutes in chapel suffices to convince me I would never change. Just to hear a soft rap at my door and a tentative, 'Nursie, are you there?' is payment enough."

Speaking with the wisdom she gained from working with the elderly, Geri leaves a message for us as we navigate our own aging. She said, "God does not intend old age to be the end of everything beautiful and rewarding. Each is in charge of her own wellness and happiness. Wellness is a process, an awareness that life must be lived moment by moment in the Lord."

Dear Geri, as you now hear the Lord saying, "What you did for the least of my people, you did for Me," we bless you on your way. Alleluia! Alleluia!

**Alleluia Letter written by
Sister Karen Berry**

Sister Geraldine Podobnik, OSF

February 15, 1939 — March 10, 2025

<i>Born:</i>	February 15, 1939
<i>Parents:</i>	Frank Podobnik and Mary Senffner
<i>Postulancy:</i>	September 8, 1957
<i>Novitiate:</i>	August 13, 1958
<i>First Profession:</i>	August 12, 1960
<i>Final Profession:</i>	August 13, 1965
<i>Entered New Life:</i>	March 10, 2025

Ministry History

1960-1961	Full-time student: College of St. Francis, Joliet, Illinois
1961-1963	Teacher: Grade 1, St. Rita, Aurora, Illinois
1963-1966	Teacher: Grade 1, St. Mary, Des Plaines, Illinois
1966-1967	Teacher: Grade 1, St. Joseph, Joliet, Illinois
1967-1970	Nurses Training: St. Joseph Hospital, Joliet
1970-1971	Registered Nurse: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet
1971-1973	Hospital Nurse: Immaculate Conception, Toledo, Ohio
1973-1974	Registered Nurse: St. Vincent, Toledo, Ohio
1974-1978	Registered Nurse: St. Charles, Oregon, Ohio
1978-1979	Registered Nurse: Flower Hospital, Sylvania, Ohio
1979-1983	Head Nurse: Flower Hospital, Sylvania
1983-1985	Unit Supervisor: Flower Hospital, Sylvania
1985-1988	Supervisor: Oncology Unit, Flower Hospital, Sylvania
1988-1990	Unit Supervisor: Oncology, Medical, Surgical, Flower Hospital, Sylvania
1990-1991	Home Care Nurse: St. Joseph Medical Center, Joliet
1991	Nurse: Home Care, Homewood, Illinois
1991-1992	Director of Pastoral Service/Registered Nurse: Mercy Health Care Rehabilitation Center, Homewood
1992-1995	Director of Nursing: Mercy Health Care Rehabilitation Center, Homewood
1995-1996	Resident Health Services: St. Francis Convent, Joliet
1996-1998	Director of Health and Wellness: St. Francis Convent, Joliet
1997-1999	Nurse: Quick Care JMG, Joliet
1999-2002	Director of Nursing for lay residents: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet
2002-2005	Triage Nurse: Will County Health Department, Joliet
2005-2011	Director Pharmacy Assistance Program/Poor and Uninsured: Will County Health Center, Joliet
2011-2013	Home Health Care: Family Members, Joliet
2013-2015	Review charts for pharmacy: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet
2015-2018	RN/MDS Care Coordinator: Our Lady of Angels Retirement Home, Joliet
2018-2025	RN/Volunteer Health Care: Wherever needed

<i>Interment:</i>	Resurrection Cemetery, Romeoville, Illinois
<i>Predeceased by:</i>	Her parents, Frank Podobnik and Mary Senffner; her brothers Frank, Joseph and Raymond
<i>Survived by:</i>	Her sister Susan A. (Michael) Fittro of Cedar Rapids, Iowa

Rest in Peace, Sister Geraldine!